

TRAIL COUNT



2018

Annual Count & Survey of San José Trails



SAN JOSE
**PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**



Trail Count 2018

Trail Count is an annual count and user survey conducted along San José Trails. The volunteer-supported effort accomplishes two goals; 1) identifies the number of trail users, and 2) gathers trail user data to improve planning, design and competitive grant-writing.

Trail Count was initiated in 2007 to document the negative impact of trail closures resulting from large-scale special events. The first year of count data supported the creation of a formal Trail Closure Process to reduce the occurrence of trail closures. For over a decade, Trail Count has documented the increasing usage of the City's Trail Network.



Trail Count 2018 occurred on Wednesday, September 12.

Seven count stations were established along four trail systems. Five of the seven stations documented increased usage which is similar to most count years.

The 2017 trail count was unusual as it recorded declines in usage at all but one count station.

The highest volume count station (Guadalupe River Trail - River Oaks Parkway) recorded a 2.2% increase this year. The Guadalupe River Trail - Riverpark Towers station saw the largest increase in use; with a 23.2% increase over the prior year. This report offers further details on these stations and the other five count stations.

Trail Count is supported by a committed group of volunteers who participate year after year demonstrating the importance of the effort to our stakeholders.

Planning Process

San José Trail Program staff have consistently conducted counts in mid-September as recommended by the [National Pedestrian and Bicycle Documentation project](#) (NPBD). This time of year is desirable for counts because:

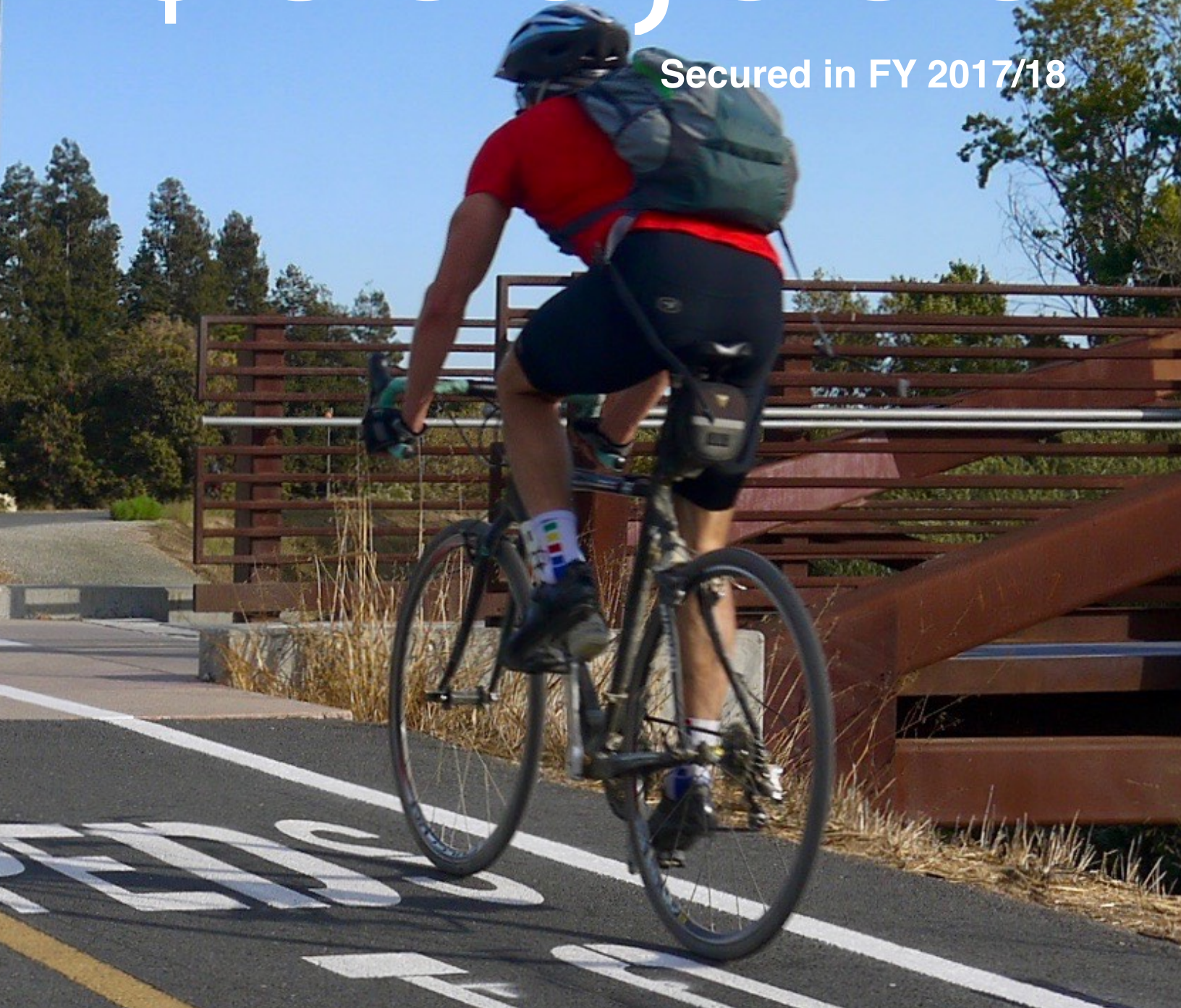
1. School is in session.
2. Weather is mild with rain unlikely.
3. Daylight hours extend past 6:00 pm.
4. Several State Grant applications are due late in the year so data collection is timely.

TRAIL COUNT 2018
improves planning,
design and
competitive grant
writing

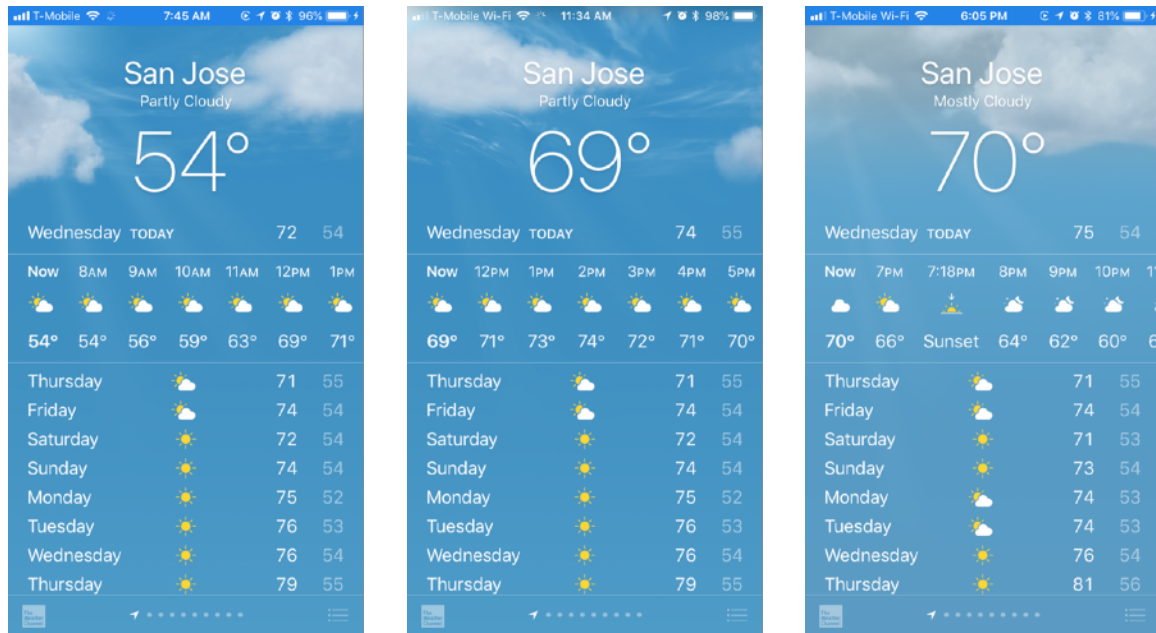
Trail Count data supports
competitive grant writing.

\$600,000

Secured in FY 2017/18



Six count stations were staffed from 7:00am to 7:00pm. This 12-hour period is recommended by the NPBD and has been used consistently along San José Trails for 12 years. The seventh count station at Los Gatos Creek - Auzerais Avenue was monitored during morning Peak Hours (7:00-9:00am) and evening Peak Hours (4:00-7:00pm). Refer to pages 29 and 30 for a map of each count station with directions on how to count trail users traveling through the area.



Weather was mild during the count day with temperatures ranging from the mid-50's in the early morning and near to mid-70's in the late morning to early evening. Skies were partly cloudy to sunny. The weather was not viewed as a barrier to trail usage.



56% of Guadalupe River Trail users enjoy the trail for active transportation.



The Guadalupe River Trail's percentage of persons using trails for active transportation (commuting) is high compared to national studies. Per the 2012 National Survey of Pedestrian and Bicyclist Attitudes and Behaviors, conducted by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, the percentage of bike commuters is about 30% (the sum of 7% commuting to/from work, 17% conducting errands, and 4% commuting to/from school).

Via the Trail Count survey, we asked San Jose Trail users on bike to state their destination. We found the following:

85% Commuting to/from work

5% Conducting errands

9% Combination of work and errands

1% Commuting to/from school

Count Station Descriptions

1. **Guadalupe River Trail at Coleman Avenue:** Located north of downtown San José. The trail travels through the 250-acre Guadalupe River Park and Gardens extends nine miles from downtown San José to Silicon Valley's Golden Triangle (major employers include Adobe Systems, Cisco Systems, Samsung and eBay). Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.
2. **Guadalupe River Trail at Riverpark Towers:** A new station in 2017, the Rivermark Towers station is centrally located in Downtown. It replaced a prior station at nearby Park Avenue which was retired after a decade of use because of the many access points that complicated the count process. The station supports more accurate counts with the well-defined trail and pedestrian bridge easily viewed. Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.
3. **Guadalupe River Trail at River Oaks Parkway:** This station had the highest annual count and captured travel along the trail and the perpendicular River Oaks Parkway bridge and ramp. River Oaks Parkway links the North First Street Light Rail to the Rivermark Neighborhood. Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.
4. **Los Gatos Creek at Auzerais Avenue:** This reach of the regional trail system is currently disconnected from the larger system. The trail links Willow Glen (via Lonus Street, near Lincoln Avenue) to Midtown, a neighborhood to the west of Downtown. Del Monte Park borders a portion of the trail to the west and offers a public restroom, dog park, play fields and soccer fields. Volunteers conducted morning and evening peak hour counts at this station.
5. **Los Gatos Creek at Hamilton Avenue:** The regional trail system extends nine miles from Meridian Avenue in San José, through Campbell and Los Gatos, and ends at the Lexington Reservoir Dam. Los Gatos Creek is recognized as one of Silicon Valley's most popular trails. The trail is adjacent to employment (eBay), housing, retail (The Pruneyard) and park/open space. Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.
6. **Los Alamitos Creek near Camden Avenue:** The six-mile trail system links to Lake Almaden, Calero Creek and Guadalupe River trails. The trail system travels through and along open space bounded by low-density residential development. The Coleman Road under-crossing opened four months ago and may support more usage along the trail system because it closes a gap. Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.
7. **Three Creeks Trail at Willow Street:** The newly completed 0.8-mile landscaped trail had been counted as an interim trail in 2015. Volunteers conducted a 12-hour count at this station.

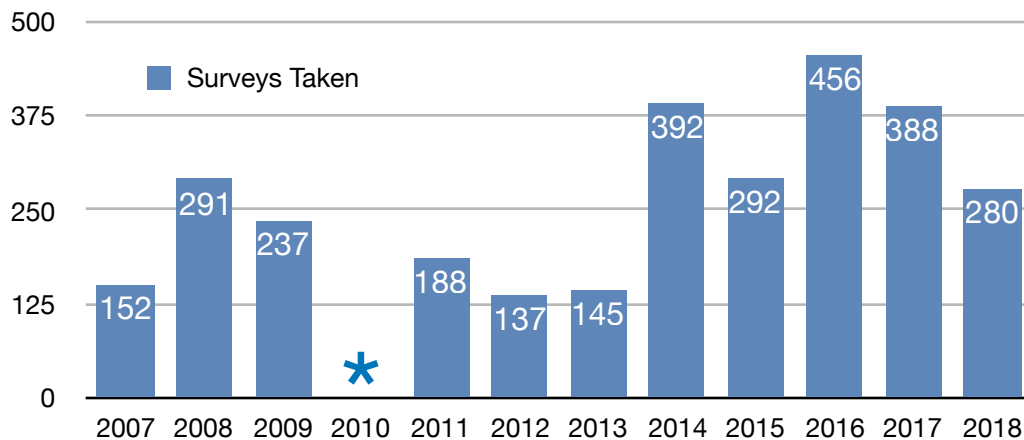
Data Collection Method

Volunteers used the following tools:

- **Count Sheet:** The count sheet permitted volunteers to count trail users at 15-minute increments. The sheet provided space to count pedestrians, bicyclists and other users. A “notes” field permitted the recording of other user types (equestrian, electric scooters, etc.) and unusual conditions (special event traffic, large groups, etc.). Count sheets displayed graphics to reinforce the definition of bicyclists (unicycles included) and pedestrians (wheelchairs and Segways included, as defined by State Law).
- **Survey Card:** A small business card provided the website address and QR code leading to the survey. This year, the card was much smaller than postcards used in past years. The smaller sized card reduced resources used and made distribution easier for volunteers. The card asked users to complete the on-line survey by Saturday, September 15.

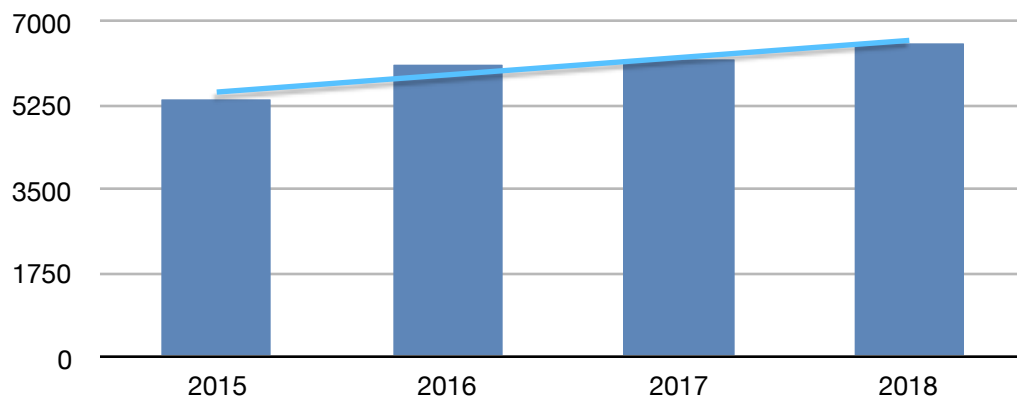


Surveys taken each year



* No survey was conducted as part of Trail Count 2010.

Cumulative Count from all Stations



Guadalupe River Trail at River Oaks Parkway



- **Instructions:** Each count sheet provided guidance for completing and returning the data. Options included email, text message and in person delivery. Nearly all count sheets were photographed and sent via text. All counts were gathered and documented by Friday, September 14.
- **Support:** The Trail Network Manager, Trail Program Senior Analyst and Volunteer Program Manager visited all sites throughout the day to respond to questions and needs regarding the count process.

Findings

Over 6,500 trail users were counted this year, which is about 350 more than 2017. Table 1 includes prior year count data for comparative purposes.

Table 1 - Count Station volumes since 2015

TRAIL COUNT LOCATION	2015	2016	2017	2018
Guadalupe at Coleman	977	1269	996	889
Guadalupe at Riverpark	N/A	N/A	724	892
Guadalupe at River Oaks	2270	2325	2,376	2,424
Los Gatos at Auzerais	167	171	160	173
Los Gatos at Hamilton	1137	1380	1,135	1,072
Los Alamitos at Greystone	819	924	832	860
Three Creeks at Willow*	39	42	N/A	258
TOTAL	5,409	6,111	6,223	6,568

* No data collected in 2017 as project was closed for construction. Data from 2015 and 2016 was captured during morning and evening peak hour periods only.

The day's count data was used to estimate the annual trips occurring along the trails by application of the Rails To Trails Conservancy's Trail Traffic Calculator. The calculator considers climate, time of year, region and other factors to project a likely annual usage figure¹. The calculator requires 12 hours of data for the projection. Therefore, the Los Gatos Creek



¹ <http://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/research-and-information/trail-modeling-and-assessment-platform/trail-traffic-calculator/>

Trail at Auzerais Avenue is not included in Table 2.

Table 2 - Projected Annual Trail Usage

COUNT STATION (high volume sites only)	Annual Avg Daily Traffic (AADT)*	ANNUAL VOLUME
Guadalupe at Riverpark Towers	999.94	364,978
Guadalupe at Coleman	953.76	348,122
Guadalupe at River Oaks Pkwy	2,531.28	923,917
Los Gatos at Hamilton	1,235.77	451,056
Los Alamitos at Camden	1,021.62	372,891
Three Creeks at Willow	299.15	109,190

* AADT calculated via the Rails to Trails Conservancy's Trail Traffic Calculator

On-Line Survey

The on-line survey was open from September 9 to September 15. There were 280 respondents. Persons were encouraged to take the survey with small cards offered at count stations, postings on Social Media (Twitter@SanJoseTrails and Instagram@SanJoseTrails), and announcement by the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition to its members.

The survey consisted of eighteen questions related to demographics, mode of travel, reason for trail use, ranking of priorities and ranking of concerns.

This year's survey also posed questions related to the five guiding principles from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services' proposed strategic plan (now under development). Questions focused on the areas of Stewardship, Nature, Equity & Access, Identity and Public Life.

Recreation and Active Transportation

The survey supports some general observations about trail users:

Mode

- 76% are biking along the Guadalupe River Trail.
- 38% are biking along the Los Gatos Creek Trail.
- 30% are biking along the Los Alamitos Creek Trail.
- 50% are biking along the Three Creeks Trail.

Active Transportation is primary motivation for 56% of Guadalupe River Trail users



Health is primary motivation for 74% of Los Alamitos Creek Trail users



Health is primary motivation for 56% of Los Gatos Creek Trail users



Change in volume, Trail Count 2017 vs. 2018

Guadalupe River Trail
Coleman Avenue

10.7% Decrease



Guadalupe River Trail
River Oaks Parkway

2.0% Increase



Guadalupe River Trail
Riverpark Towers

23.2% Increase



Los Gatos Creek Trail
Auzerais Avenue

8.1% Increase



Los Gatos Creek Trail
Hamilton Avenue

5.5% Decrease



Los Alamitos Creek Trail
Camden Avenue

3.4% Increase

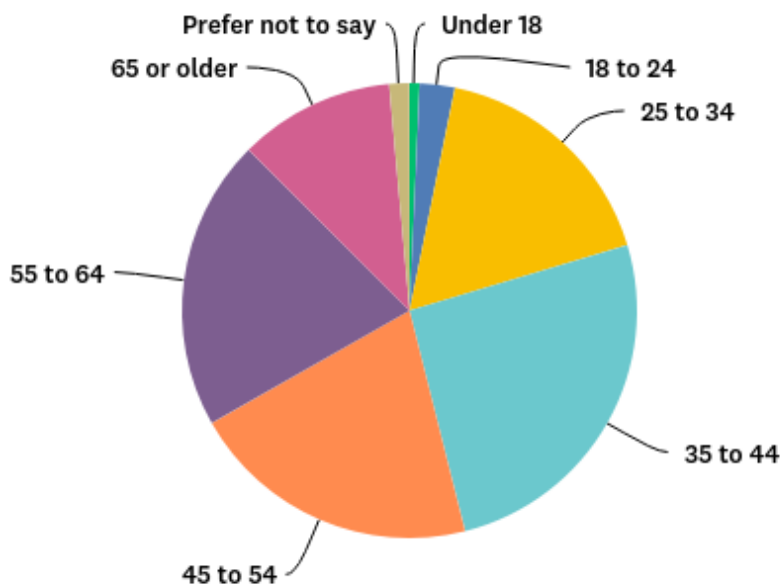


Three Creeks Trail
Willow Street

NEW

Q1. What is your age?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.71%	2
18 to 24	2.50%	7
25 to 34	17.14%	48
35 to 44	25.71%	72
45 to 54	20.71%	58
55 to 64	20.71%	58
65 or older	11.07%	31
Prefer not to say	1.43%	4
TOTAL		280

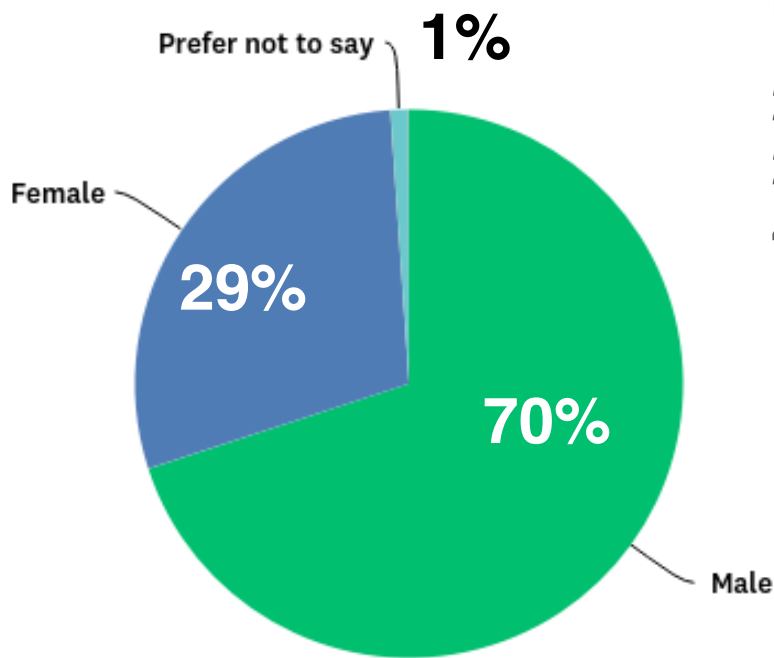


48% of persons over 65 use trails predominantly for health.

About **46%** of persons between 35 and 64 use trails for active transportation.



Q2. What is your gender?



Percent of women using trails:

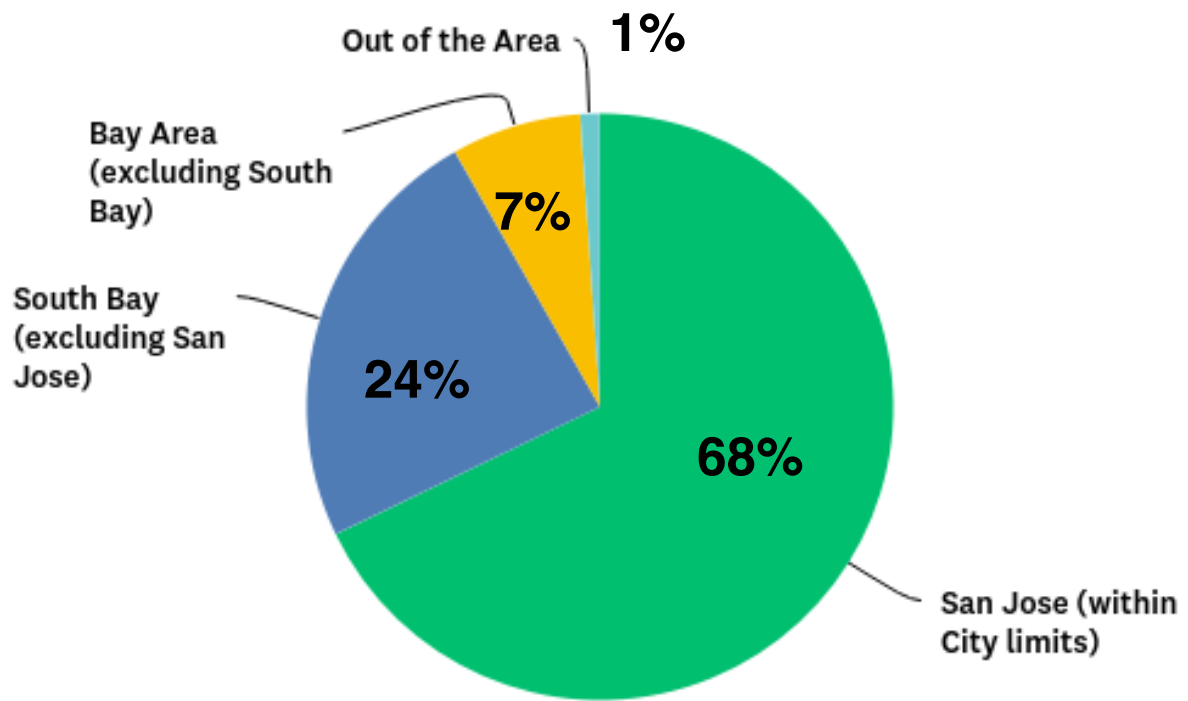
24% of Guadalupe River Trail

27% of Los Gatos Creek Trail

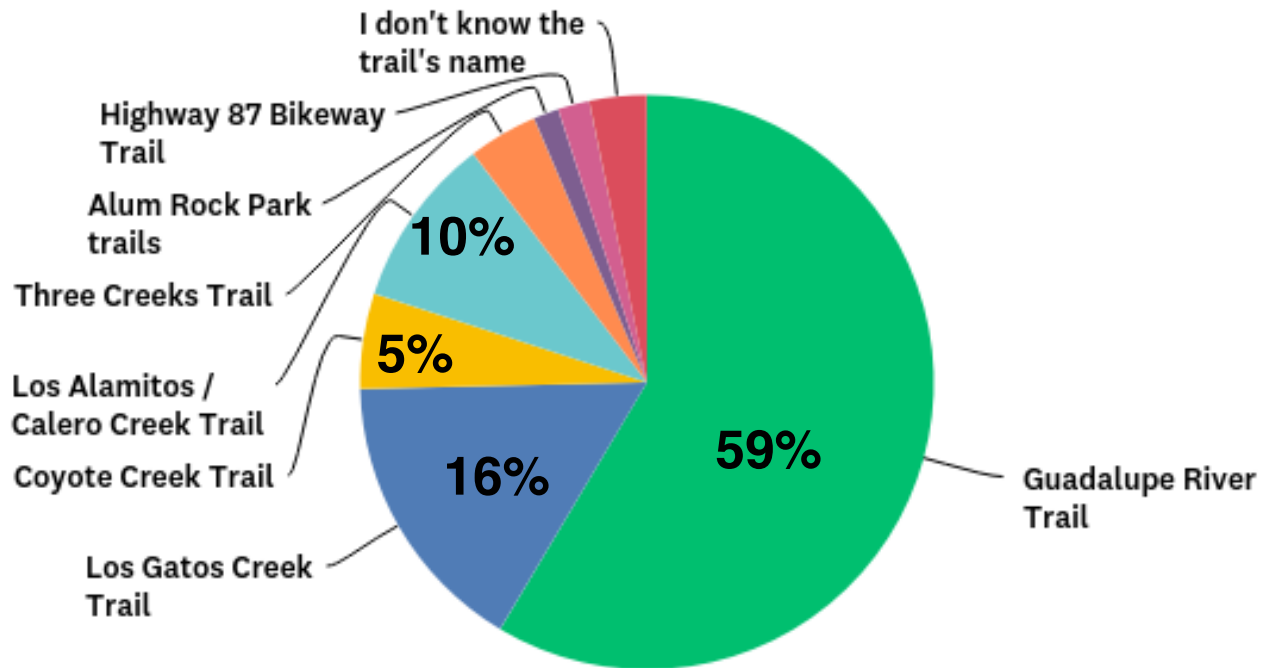
44% of Los Alamitos Creek Trail



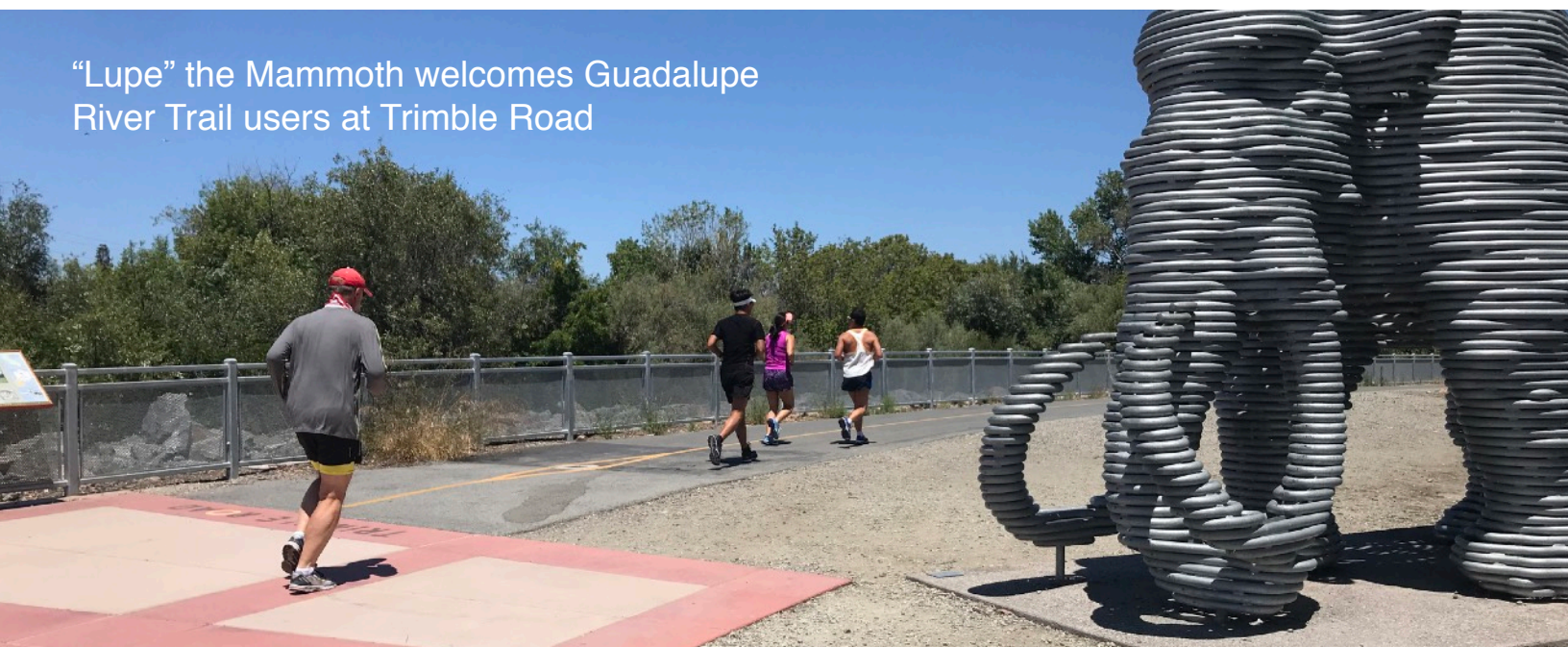
Q3. Where do you call home?



Q4. Which San José Trail did you last visit?

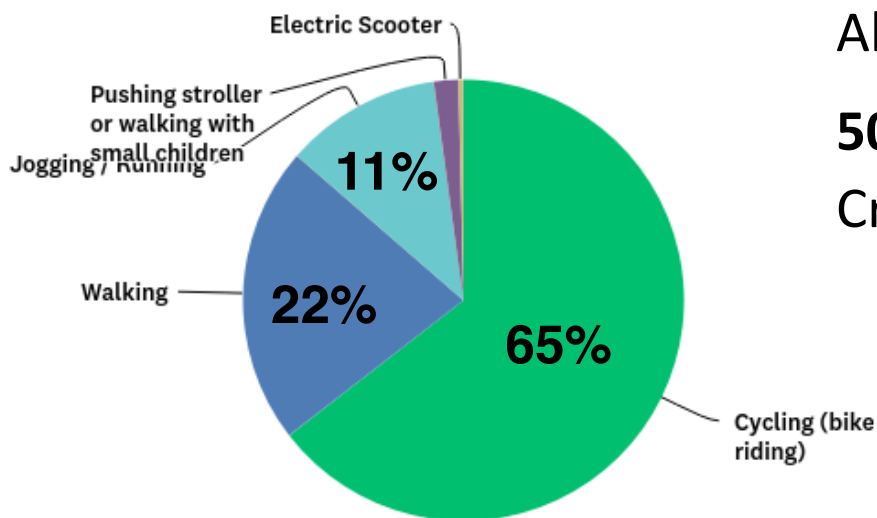


“Lupe” the Mammoth welcomes Guadalupe River Trail users at Trimble Road



Q5. How did you use the trail on your last visit?

65% report biking along trail network



76% bike along Guadalupe River Trail (23% walk; 1% electric scooter)

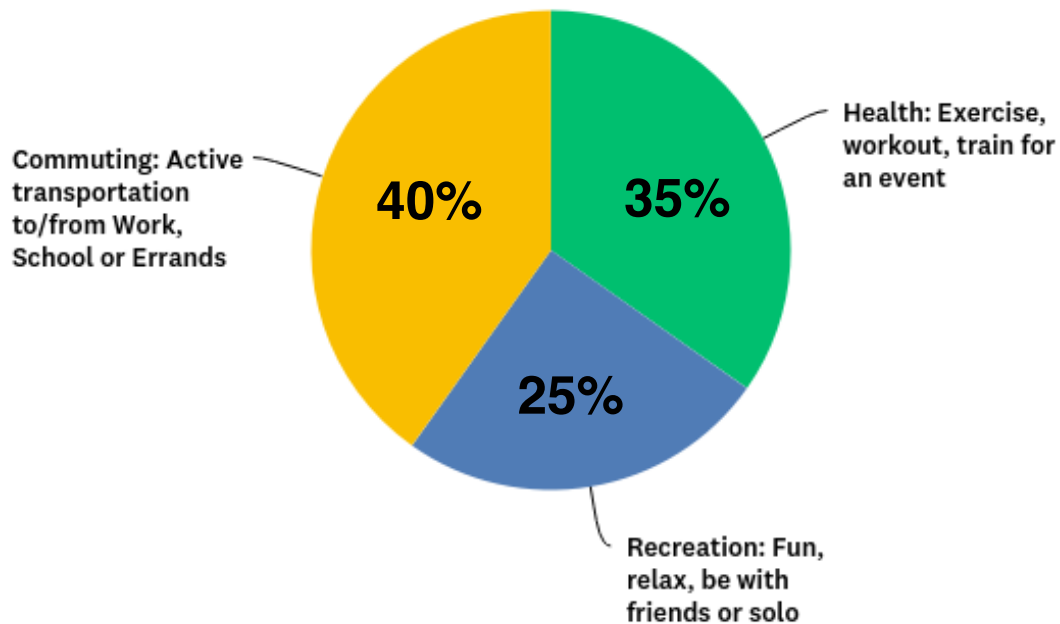
38% bike along Los Gatos Creek Trail

30% bike along the Los Alamitos Creek Trail

50% bike along the Three Creeks Trail



Q6. What was your primary reason for using the trail on your last visit?



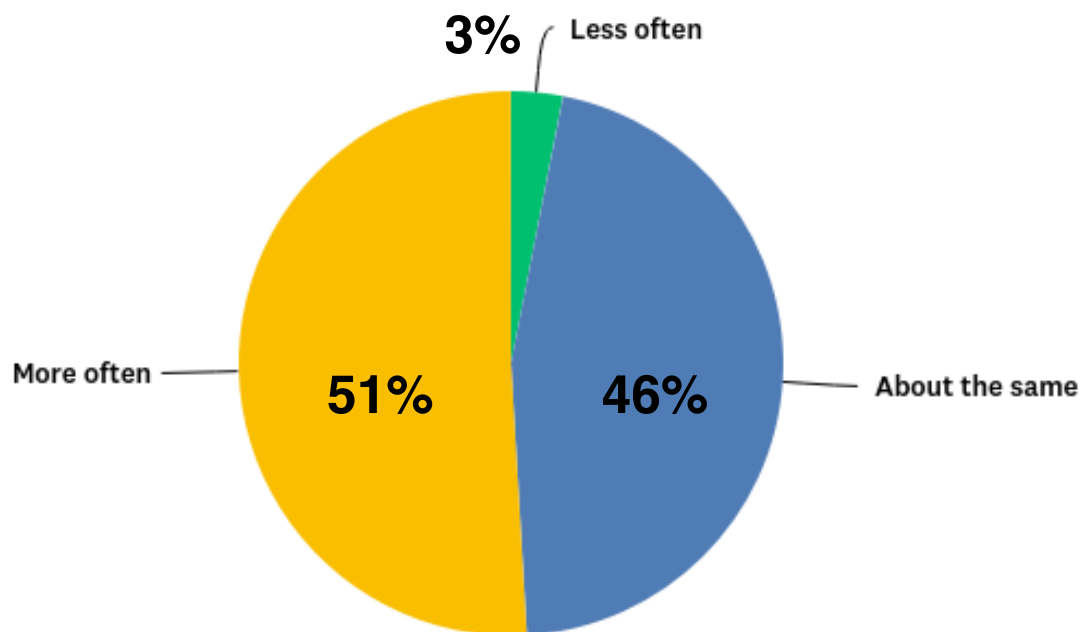
More people are using trails primarily for recreation*:

2008 = 10%

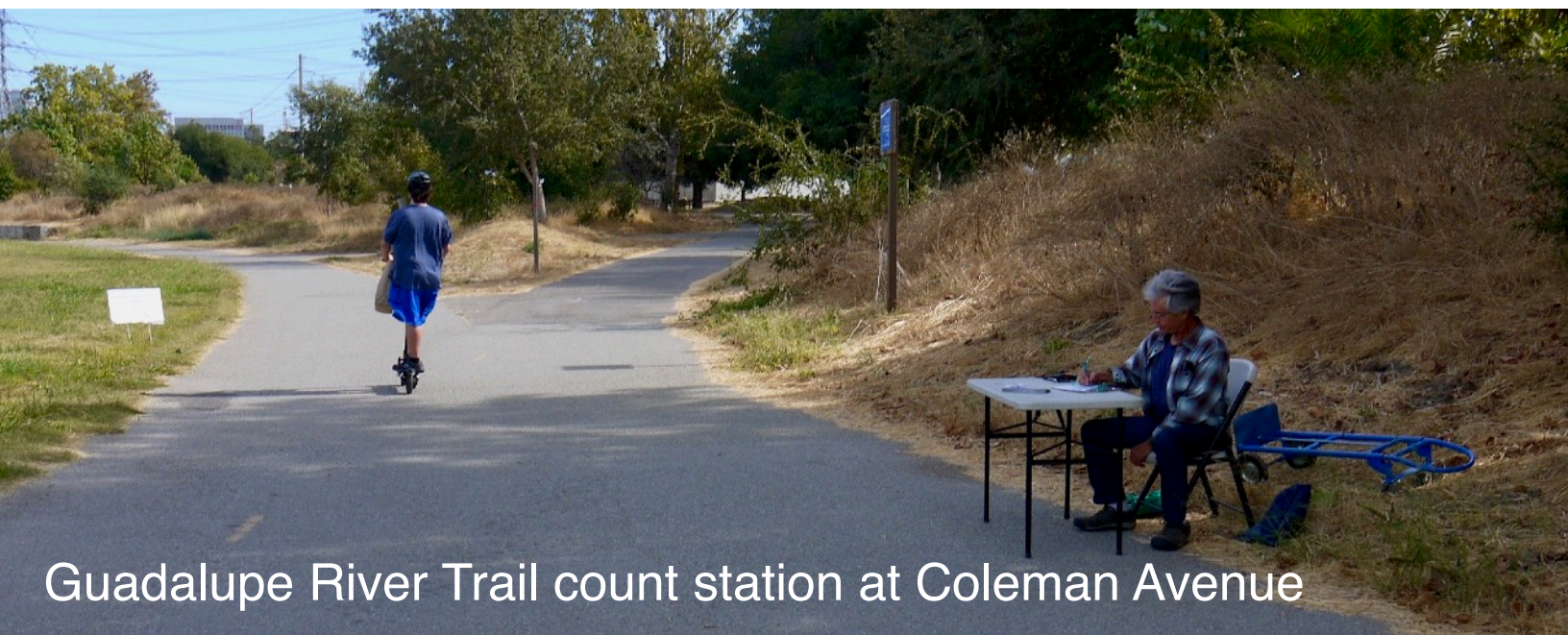
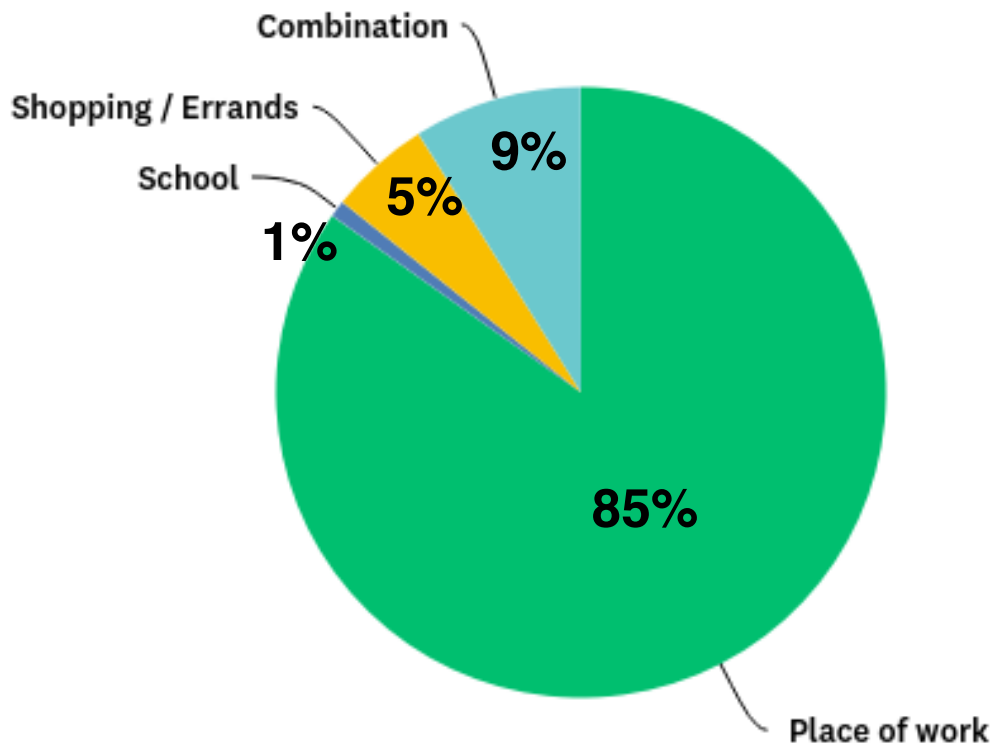
2018 = 25%

* The majority of trail users report Commuting and Health as primary motivators.

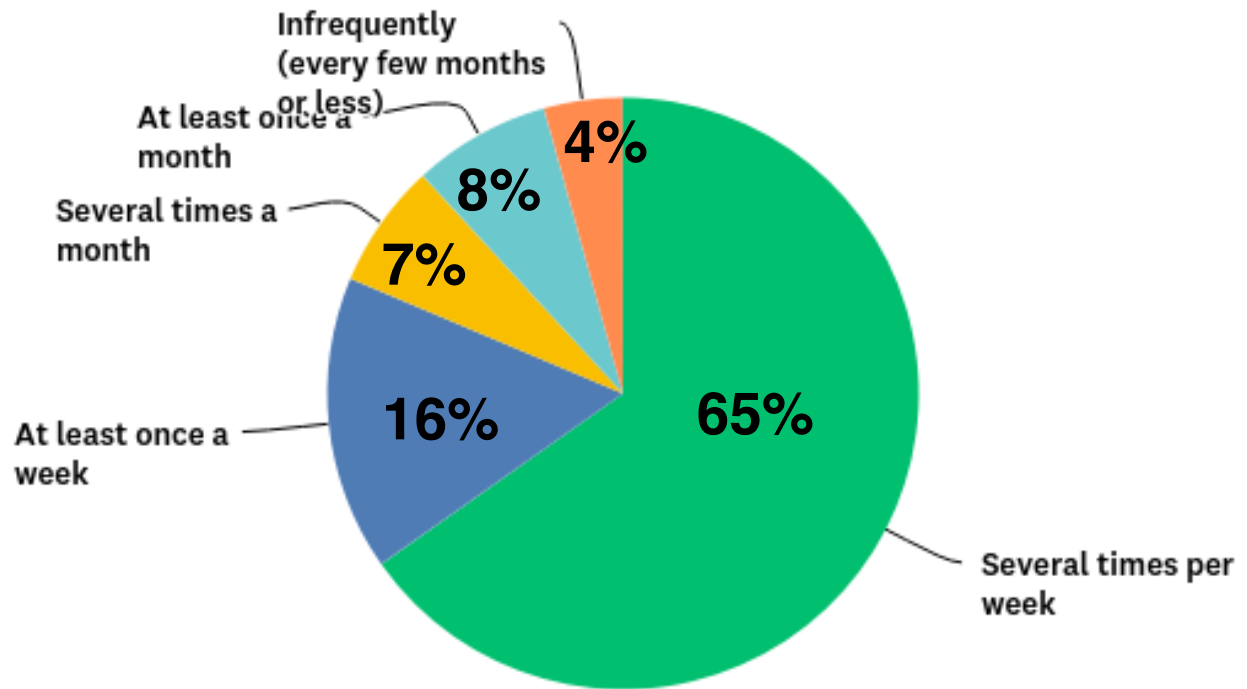
Q7. The Guadalupe River Trail is not yet fully developed. Completion of a 5-mile trail extension from Virginia Street (Downtown) to Chynoweth Avenue (south San Jose) would cause you to use the trail system:



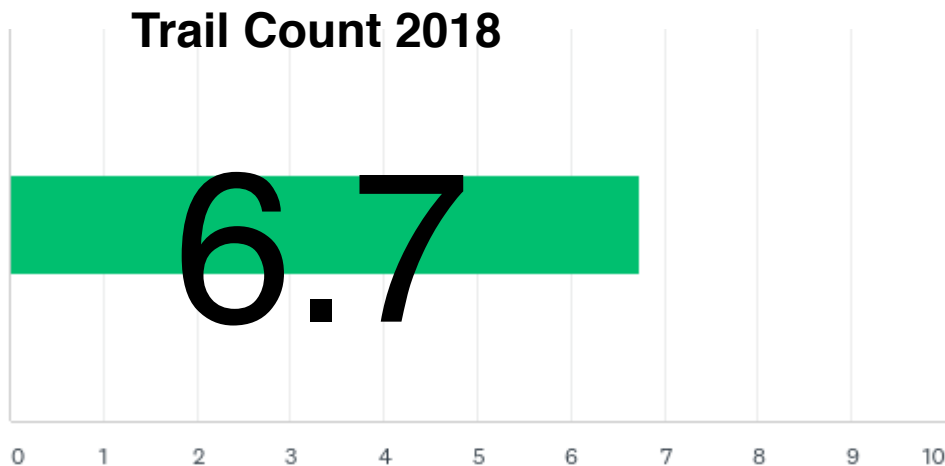
Q8. If commuting, which best defines your destination?



Q9. How often do you visit San José Trails?



Q10. How would you rate the condition of San Jose trails?



“There is some flooding in winter - something needs to be done to make these accessible throughout the year.”

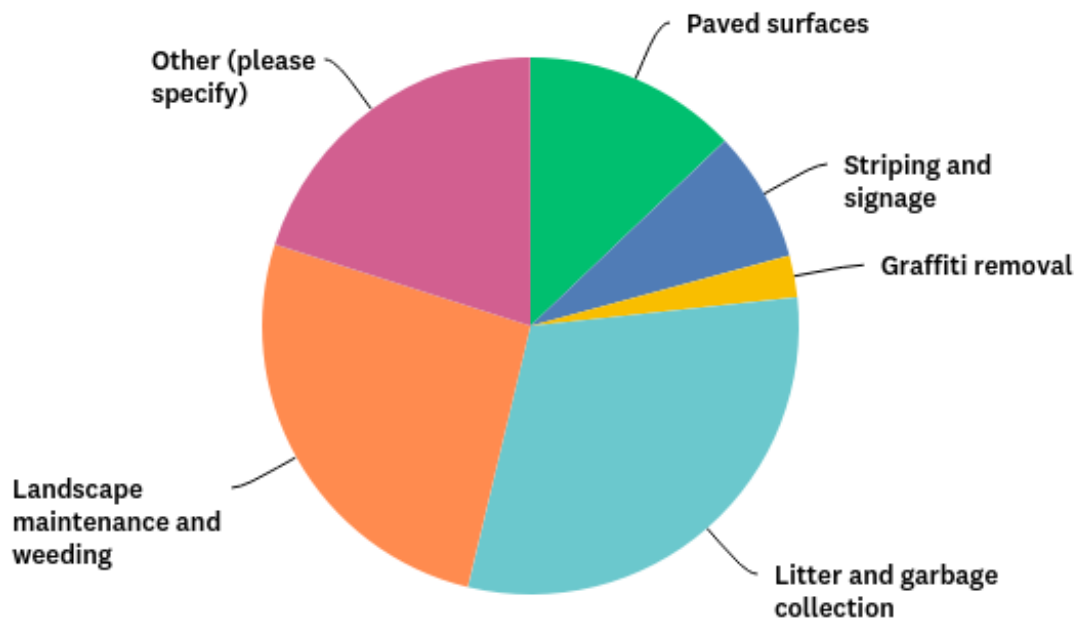
“Cracks in pavement on GRT are getting large enough to catch wheels.”

“Overall, I like the trail system a lot. They are well kept and maintained. There is a little graffiti, but not a lot. Most trails are safe but there are places which need help.”

“I love the trails!”

“I love the trail network in SJ, but large sections of the trail are in desperate need of better cleaning and maintenance all around: clean up the homeless camps.”

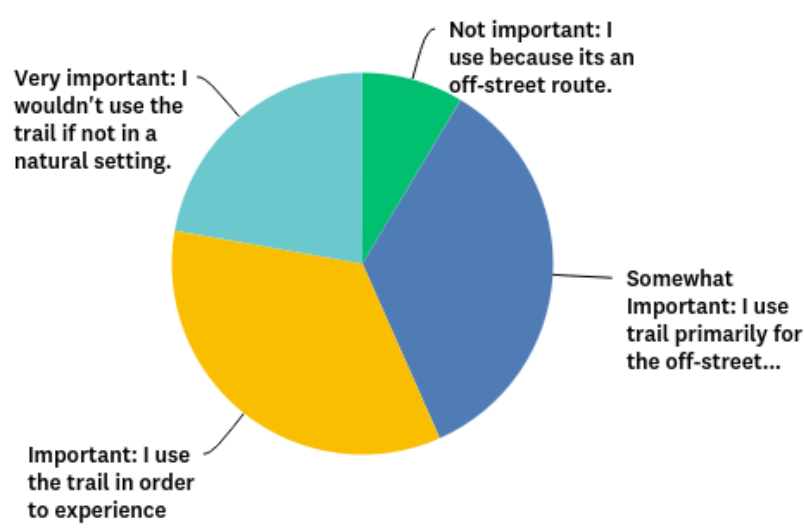
Q11. In terms of trail maintenance, what needs the most attention?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paved surfaces	12.90%	36
Striping and signage	7.89%	22
Graffiti removal	2.51%	7
Litter and garbage collection	30.47%	85
Landscape maintenance and weeding	26.16%	73
Other (please specify)	20.07%	56
TOTAL		279

Persons reporting “other”, specified the following issues: homeless encampments, litter, weed/landscape maintenance, sense of safety, post-flood maintenance, debris clean-up, sweeping and speed enforcement.

Q12. How important is access to nature in your decision to use a San Jose trail?



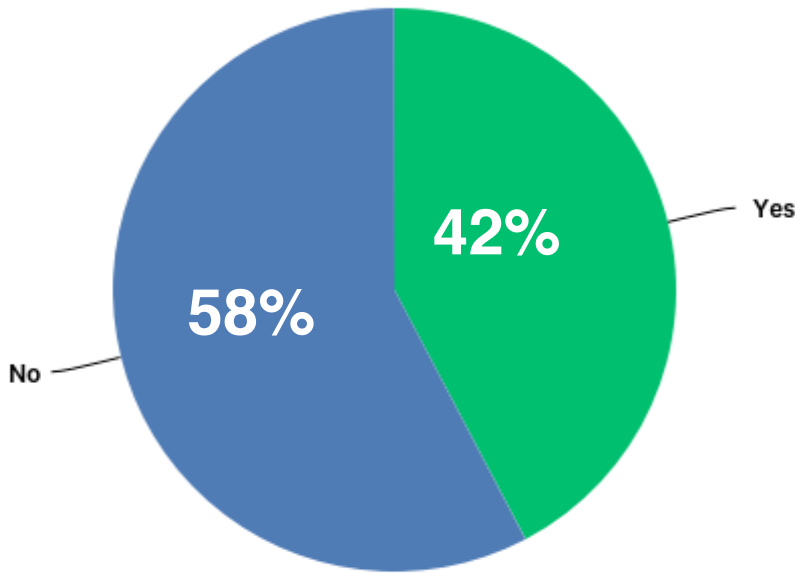
“You guys are doing a great job! Let’s make sure nature and safety always prevail here.”

“The most important part of the trail is being able to experience some nature in the city.”

“Voluntary trail clean-up welcome, just organize and announce it.”

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not important: I use because its an off-street route.	8.60%	24
Somewhat Important: I use trail primarily for the off-street route but enjoy the view.	34.77%	97
Important: I use the trail in order to experience nature as I exercise or commute.	34.41%	96
Very important: I wouldn't use the trail if not in a natural setting.	22.22%	62
TOTAL		279

Q13. Are you aware that San Jose has developed over 60 miles of the planned 100-mile Trail Network?



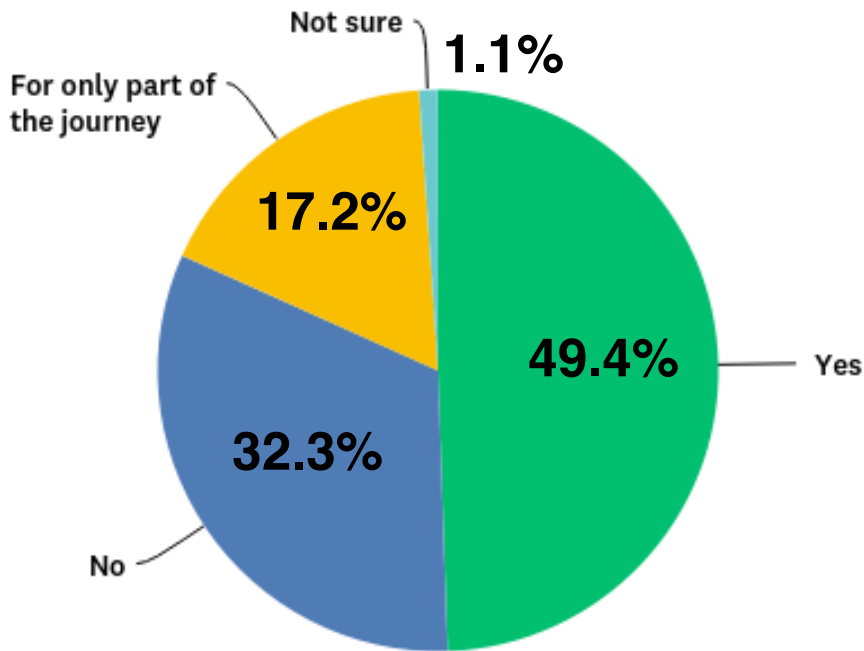
“Wow. I don’t now, but I would like to know more. I am very pleased to have found San Jose Trails on Twitter, so that helps.”

“Add on-street way finding signage at trail access points. It always surprises me how many people have no idea they live near a trail.”

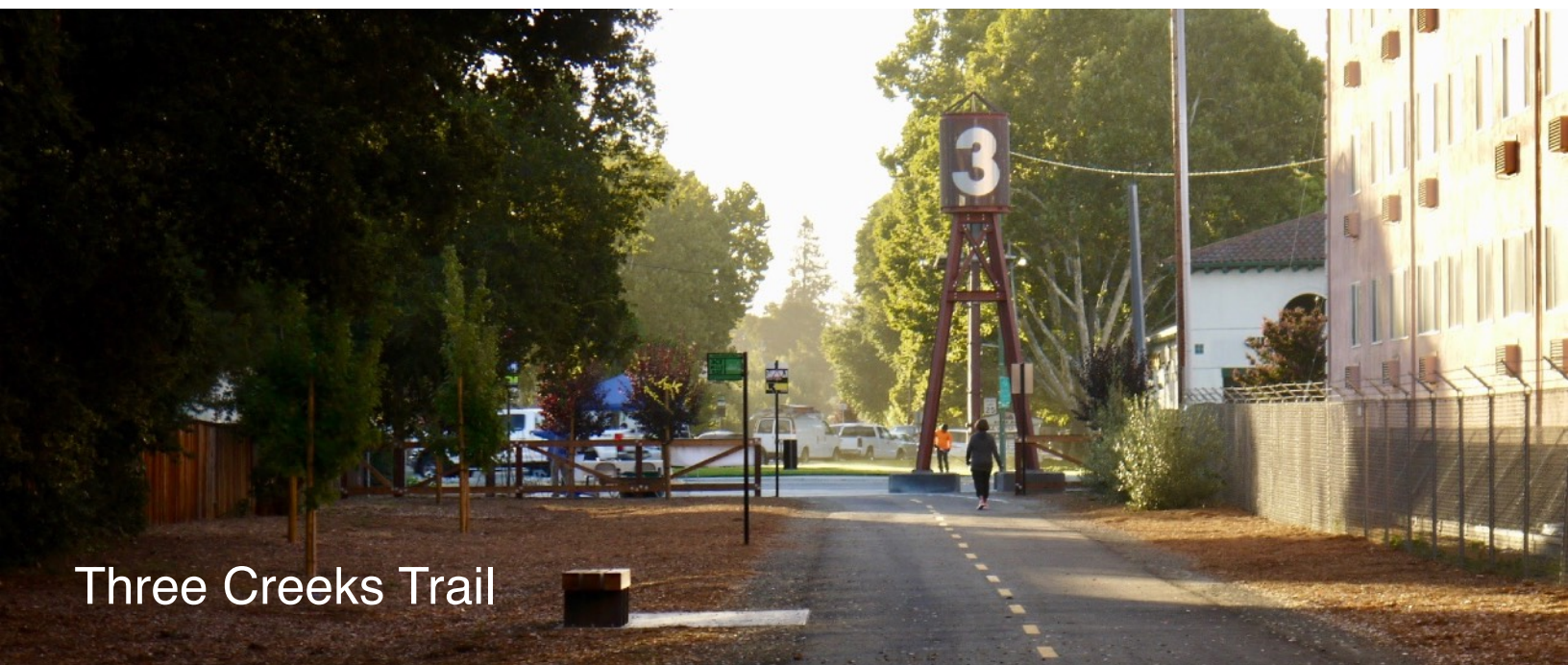
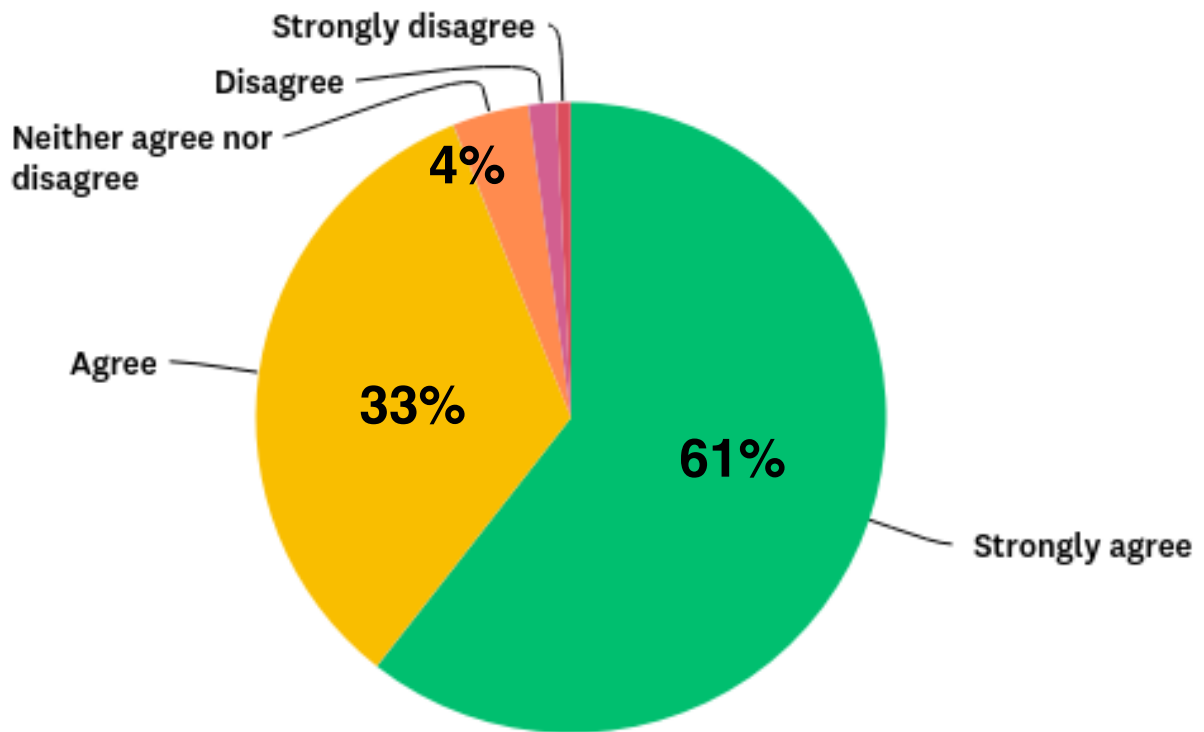
“I enjoy the trail system quite a bit and it seems to be utilized quite a bit. It helps thread together some neighborhoods.”



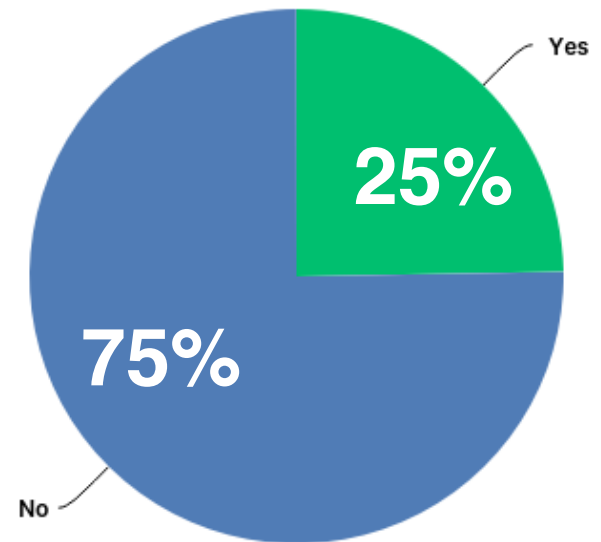
Q14. For your most recent trail visit, did you use an on-street bike lane to reach the trail?



Q15. Trails support San Jose's identity as a healthy city.



Q16. In the past year, have you attended an event along downtown's Guadalupe River Trail and Park?



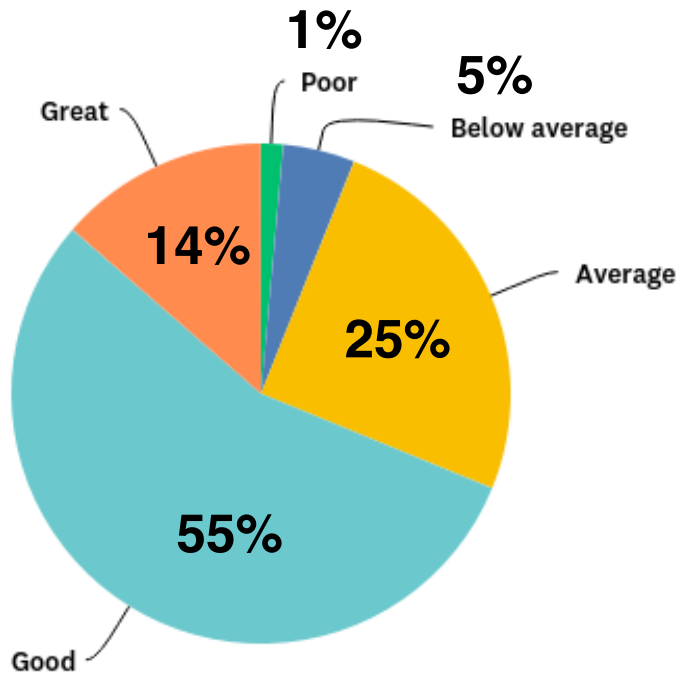
"I used the trail to attend cultural event at city hall'."

"Hold more events along the trails. The Guadalupe River Trail is a perfect venue for an art and wine festival or a music festival..."

Suggestion: "A multi-week trails festival that has events at each [trail system]."

Q17. What is your impression of San Jose trails?

Q18. Comments or Suggestions



"I wish the trails were better connected along their route and had better feeder-connections to bike lanes"

"Illegal dumping is a recurring problem."

"Homeless encampments and related trash on Guadalupe River Trail from Willow Street to Curtner Avenue is dangerous and completely out of

"I use the trail every day to commute to work. Thanks for the good work. Please keep it up."

"[I] use so many of the trails for daily errands, hiking and getting off the street!"

"I've been running on the trails coming up to two decades. It is a marvelous resource. I've seen voluntary clean-up crews and a diverse group using the trail. Thank you for keeping them open!"

"While the rest of trails are great, the under bridge passes are under maintained"

"The more trails the better!
Keep it up!"

Big Thank You to our volunteers!



50 counters
107 hours provided
7 count stations
280 surveys taken

GUADALUPE RIVER TRAIL River Oaks Count Station



✗ Count Station location

TIP: Count persons using the bridge as "Trail Users". No need to document as a separate movement.

Count all users regardless of direction a "trail users"

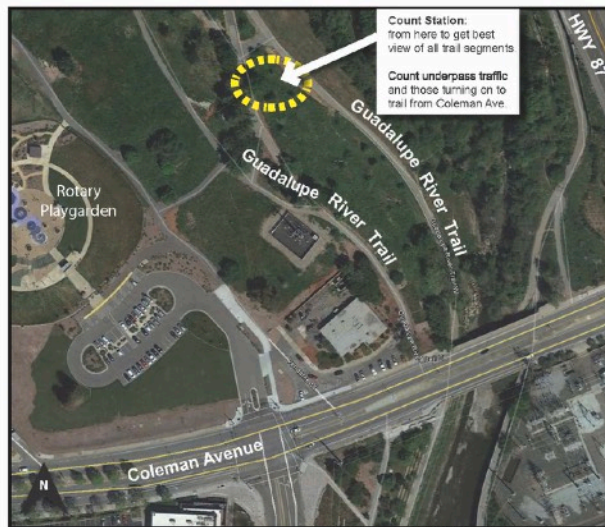
Count Station GUADALUPE RIVER TRAIL



✗ COUNT STATION

West bank trail, at fountain. Persons crossing nearby bridge are counted as trail users.

Coleman Avenue Count Station GUADALUPE RIVER TRAIL

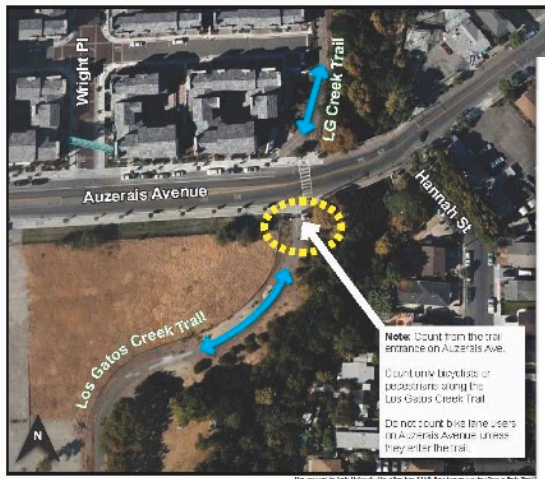


Count Station:
from here to get best
view of all trail segments

Count underpass traffic
and those turning on to
trail from Coleman Ave.

Map produced by David R. Corne, City of San Jose GIS. Base imagery courtesy Google Earth. Sept. 2013

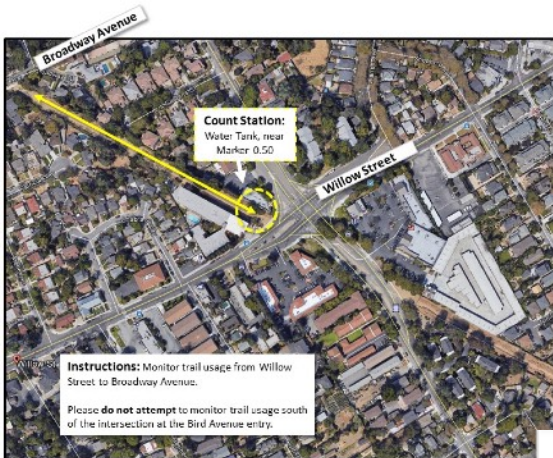
Auzerais Avenue Count Station LOS GATOS CREEK TRAIL



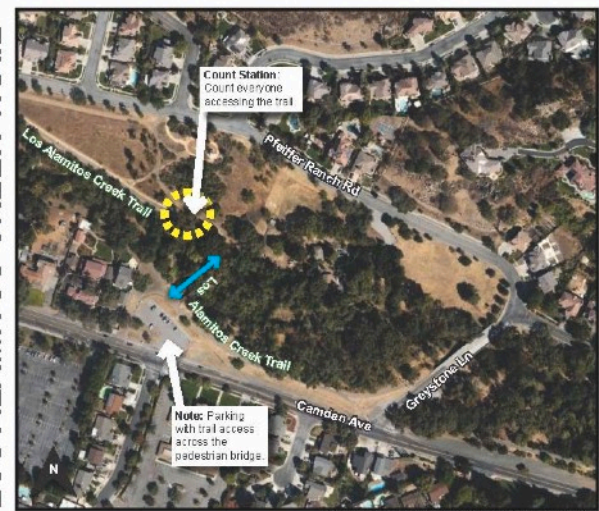
Hamilton Ave Count Station LOS GATOS CREEK TRAIL



THREE CREEKS TRAIL Willow Street Gateway (Water Tank)



Graystone Lane Count Station LOS ALAMITOS CREEK TRAIL



Some final thoughts...

“Love the trail systems!”

“Keep on doing what you're doing. And a big thanks to the volunteers who were out this morning taking count.”

“Thanks for the great effort on the trails.”

“Your Trail Count volunteers were nice!”

Trail Program staff wish to acknowledge the many volunteers and partners that make Trail Count successful year after year. Our long-term partner, the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy has hosted one of the busiest stations. Our advocates with Save Our Trails have counted the newly developed Three Creeks Trails. Our volunteers counted at seven count stations across the City. And our consulting partners, Callander Associates, Mark Thomas and Company and Jacobs Engineering coordinated teams to support several stations.

Special thanks goes to Mollie Tobias, our Volunteer Program Manager and Beth Tidwell, Senior Analyst.

Thank you all!

Yves Zsutty
Trail Network Manager
Department of Parks Recreation
and Neighborhood Services
Trail Program



Photographs by Yves Zsutty

